

A black and white photograph of two young people, a woman and a man, looking at a laptop screen. The woman is on the left, smiling, and the man is on the right, wearing glasses. They are both wearing aprons. The image is overlaid with large, semi-transparent purple geometric shapes, including a large 'L' shape and various rectangles and triangles. The text 'ONE-STOP GUIDE' and 'VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font on the left side of the image.

# ONE-STOP GUIDE VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR

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The ultimate guide to virtual career fairs - what they are, what to look for and how to plan your virtual career fair



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# ONE-STOP GUIDE TO HOSTING A VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR

How to settle on your virtual career fair provider and plan for your event



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## 1. Introduction

10+ years of experience in digital recruitment of graduates and 5+ years of experience in the hosting of virtual career fairs have culminated here. We are proud to present the Graduateland one-stop guide to virtual career fairs.

This guide will teach you everything you need to know about virtual career fairs. Not only will you learn how to host one, what features are useful to your situation specifically, and how to prepare. But this guide will also equip you with valuable insights and best practices drawn from 100+ successfully hosted virtual career events. Dive into this guide and become a virtual career fair pro!

## 2. What is a virtual career fair?

A virtual career fair is the ideal meeting point for your audience and potential employers. It is an online recruitment and employer branding event similar to traditional job fairs - only fully digitised. Job seekers can meet potential employers without leaving their apartment and hiring companies can access a large candidate pool from their offices. Virtual career fairs are time- and cost-efficient!

In short, virtual career fairs are events where companies and organisations interact with participants; no matter where either is located.



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Virtual events are the way forward when physical meetings are a less-than-ideal option - be it because of outside forces (such as a global pandemic), or because you are trying to reach and connect with a wider, more location-diverse audience - or even cut down costs. It is also the more environmentally-friendly option.

Digitisation of events is judged to be cold and impersonal - but nothing could be further from the truth! Virtual career fairs are a great tool to demystify recruitment processes, put a face to hiring companies and increase the communication every step of the way. For example, virtual career fairs are filled with state-of-the-art interactions via live webinars and presentations, chat conversations, video calls and a booking system for scheduled conversations.

### **3. Benefits of a virtual career fair**

It is tempting to see virtual career fairs exclusively as the digitisation of more traditional in-person events. However, there are many things to consider when selecting a virtual career fair - they have heaps of benefits that, if you ask us, make them far superior to physical fairs. But we will let you discover that for yourself!





### 3.1. Benefits of virtual career fairs

Although many believe that virtual career fairs worsen communication - we don't agree with that. After 100+ hosted events, we have experienced that virtual career fairs improve interactions in more ways than one.

#### Increased one-on-one communication

Our research shows that there are more one-on-one conversations happening during a virtual career fair when compared to a physical fair. Here's why:

At a physical fair, a recruiter can engage with 1-2 visitors at a time due to the 1-to-1 basis of the interaction. If you have 2-3 recruiters per stall this will limit the amount of feasible interactions during the day.

*“Virtual fairs enable better interactions for students - the quality of conversations being one-on-one and uninterrupted is a huge benefit for both students and employers.”*

**Becky Gardner**



During a virtual career fair, recruiters are able to handle multiple conversations at the same time - as many as they are comfortable with. They can go back-and-forth between conversations and even continue them after the event! This system allows for more and more meaningful conversations. Not only is the amount of conversations increased, but their average duration and depth are also improved.



*"Our students had one to one progressive conversations with employers- this is not possible at a busy physical fair!"*

**Adel Coleman**



And the same goes for fair participants! They are able to reach out to several companies in a short amount of time - and quickly realise which ones are relevant to their particular profile.

*"The strongest element of the platform is the fact that candidates can reach out to so many companies so easily."*

**Adam Jeppsson**



### **The ideal platform for less outgoing students**

Walking up to strangers at a career fair to strike up a conversation out of thin air can be intimidating. Especially for less outgoing candidates. Virtual career fairs are the ideal platform for those who are not traditionally outgoing.

Our experience with hundreds of university events show us that many students are more comfortable reaching out to the companies through chat instead of in real life.



Ultimately, this increases the amount of students who have meaningful connections with companies. And it gives recruiters access to an entire pool of candidates who might otherwise not reach out to them.

*"I thought the virtual fair was really good, a better opportunity to talk to employers directly without too many crowds and a better way of talking to the exact employers."*

**Student attending Queen's University of Belfast**



### **Students and employers find each other more easily**

A recurring feedback point across events is how easy it is to find relevant companies, jobs and candidates. Participants have easy access to information on the exhibitors before a virtual career fair. Their branding material, open positions and even participating team members are available in company stalls - which makes it easy for candidates to do their research and find the most relevant companies.





And not only that - every data point in a participant's profile is "searchable". Meaning that exhibitors are able to be proactive and reach out to the students. They can easily filter participants and find the exact pool of candidates best suited to a specific position, and contact them right then and there - no need for polite chit-chat that leads nowhere.

*"The best thing is that you as a student really can do what you want with the platform and prepare easily, you can also skip the small talk if you want to in an easy way. A good strength is that you can read about things while you talk about them, or just before you talk about them. On a physical fair I can't prepare and remember everything about each company, on a virtual fair I always have access to all the material."*

**Felix Kåhrström**





### Increased information-sharing

At a physical event, keeping tabs on company brochures, CVs and phone numbers can be a hassle. Virtual career fairs allow recruiters to easily share not only information on the company in their booth, but the chat function allows them to tailor their communication and material to specific candidates and conversations.

Likewise, participants can very easily share their on-platform profiles, but also attach specific applications or documents.

Once the virtual career fair is over, all chats are still available, making it easy to follow up for both parties. No more messy paper folders and business cards left behind!

*"You can easily save information about the student and stay in contact for longer with students/companies. It's also easy to communicate with a lot of different students at a time."*

**Kristin Augustsson**



### 3.2. Virtual career fairs have no physical boundaries

The beauty of virtual career fairs is that they can be fully digital - and thus have no physical limitations. Our experience shows that the lack of limitations is twofold, and shines through in more than one way:

#### More location-diverse participants

Physical career fairs have traditionally been very location-specific. Most people who attended them - both employers and candidates - were close to each other. With virtual career fairs, location plays a significantly smaller role.

*"The Virtual event is a great platform to break down geographical boundaries and provide matchmaking opportunities between students, job seekers and companies for either greater diverse groups or niche based career events. It also provides an in depth data landscape that will support continuous development of online activities between relevant stakeholders"*

Lars Frank-Larsen



University of  
Southern Denmark



Exhibitors and participants can attend from wherever they are located in the world - they just need access to a computer and somewhat stable internet connection. This has several unexpected benefits:

- Larger and more diverse talent pool
- Higher number of attending companies
- Possibility of working remotely

### **No physical limitations**

Even though physical fairs are usually held in large spaces, there is no way of completely avoiding limitations to how many participants - and exhibitor booths - can be accommodated. With a virtual career fair, there are no limits to participants or exhibitors - providing as large a platform as needed!

### **Keep in mind!**

Just as with physical fairs, virtual career fair organisers experience a fall from the registered attendees to those who actually show up - avoid this by marketing your virtual career fair to your audience! Need help marketing to virtual career fair participants? We've got you covered with our *Virtual Career Fair Student Marketing Guide*!

## **3.3. Virtual career fairs make it easy to track numbers and ROI**

Oftentimes, it is hard for exhibitors at physical career fairs to track and measure their efforts. Virtual career fairs make it easy to keep track of exactly how many participants visit company stalls, apply to jobs and how many booked video conversations are held. Which makes return-on-investment analysis significantly easier. Moreover, available resources and manpower are more effectively organised and allocated during virtual career fairs. For example, chat topics can easily be divided among team members, and specific people can be put in charge of i.e. candidate sourcing or video conversations.





### **3.4. Virtual career fairs have a significantly lower economic - and environmental - footprint**

The cost of hosting and participating in a virtual career fair are significantly lower than in physical fairs. The cost of a stall is lower - but other expenses such as furniture rental, physical branding material, transportation to and from the event, and allocated manpower also decrease with a virtual career fair.

On top of lower economical impact, virtual career fairs also are significantly less impactful on the environment - up to thousands fewer people will need to transport themselves to and from the venue (depending on the size of your event), lighting and heating will be unnecessary, and there will be no single-use cups/plates/silverware used on that day!

...but there will also be no free goodies for the attendees! Offering free coffee, snacks and branded freebies is how many exhibitors catch the attention of fair-goers. However, exhibitors can easily go virtual with their material, and offer “virtual goodie bags”, or even host contests based on user participation. More on that in our *Insights & Best Practices* doc!

*"I think it's better than a physical event as students that attend are really interested in companies and not just coming for the freebies."*

**Lorraine Sammon**



## 4. Virtual career fair features

When selecting a virtual career fair provider, it is important to make sure the features of the platform cover your needs. Here are some important features that we have fine-tuned and improved based on hundreds of hosted events and their feedback.

### 4.1. Simple and intuitive interface

It goes without saying that the easier a platform is to use, the better the experience will be for everyone involved. For organisers, exhibitors and users alike, our platform has been described as very easy to use and thoroughly intuitive. There is very little onboarding needed and after a single demo, most are able to navigate the functionalities with ease.

### 4.2. Support & assistance

Sometimes things don't go as planned, or there is a need for extra assistance. And having a competent team at your disposal is a great feature to have when organising a virtual career fair.

*“Graduateland were on hand to help when we had questions.*

*Issues were identified and dealt with promptly and effectively. Throughout the entire process, communication has been timely and professional, giving us complete confidence in the smooth-running of the event.”*

**Lucy Everett**



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Feeling supported every step of the virtual career fair journey is something that will make you feel at ease and comfortable with your virtual career fair. At Graduateland & Online Career Events, we assign you a Customer Success Manager who will help you with demonstrations, technical support and assist you in your needs to ensure your virtual career fair runs smoothly.

*We had a very short period to start organizing our virtual matchmaking event, getting to know the platform, support our companies and students with using the platform. Graduateland has supported us a lot. Not only us with getting to know the platform but all companies attending by organising test calls amongst other things.”*



#### 4.3. Demos & previews

Just as we provide virtual career fair onboarding for event organisers, our Customer Success team is available for demonstrations aimed at exhibitors or even students. It is up to each individual host how involved/hands-off they would like us to be - and we are happy to assist you along the way!



#### **4.4. Hyper-personalised company stalls**

Each company and organisation has their own brand - and going virtual should not equal compromising on the quality of branding material. Virtual career fairs offer a great opportunity to amp up the branding options.

Gone are dusty roll-ups and branded pens - and in come video reels, plenty of images and texts that support the personality of a company.

#### **4.5. LIVE webinars and pre-recorded presentations**

Oftentimes, keynote speakers and company presentations are the highlight of a physical event. Why should that be any different for virtual career fairs?

Our virtual career fair platform offers an easy live presentation schedule setup for webinars, company talks, Q&A sessions or any other live broadcast that you could imagine - right on the platform! And if you have a company that does not wish to present live, that's fine! They can upload a pre-recorded presentation which will get played at the scheduled time.

#### **4.6. Easily accessible candidate profiles**

We know finding thorough information on virtual career fair exhibitors is important to visitors - but it is equally important for companies to have easy access to user profiles, CVs and contact information. On our platform, recruiters and companies have full access to the profiles that users have uploaded.

#### **4.7. The sourcing/filtering feature**

One of the challenges of physical events is that the contact is very one-sided. Users can visit company stalls, but there is no way for companies to reach out to the participants... unless they pull people into their stalls demanding information.

A great asset to look for in a virtual career fair is the sourcing/filtering feature. What this means is that a recruiter can easily filter candidates using every single data point in their profile - majors, graduation date, languages - and then contact the potential candidates right on the platform with a single click.

#### **4.8. Data insights on events - live**

Having a feeling for how an event is going can be a little more challenging when it is fully digital. Are people connecting? Watching presentations and asking questions?

Having live data insights is a great way to get a digital “feel” for how a virtual career fair is going. Several metrics will help you, as organisers, keep an eye on how the virtual career fair is going:

- Registered participants
- Active participants
- Presentation viewers
- Total chats and breakdown per stall
- Total visits per stall
- Applications sent

#### **4.9. Reporting**

Measuring recruitment efforts can be hard - but is essential to calculating return on investment. Offering exhibitors a clear post-virtual career fair report is a great feature to look for in a virtual career fair provider.

Not only will a report provide exhibitors with a clear view of how effective their recruitment efforts were, but it will also help organisers better understand the demographic of participants, as well as which companies are most interesting to participants.

#### **4.10. One-on-one interactions**

The essence of a virtual career fair is to connect an audience with potential employers. And that cannot happen without one-on-one communication. The more options there are for interaction between exhibitors and participants, the higher the chances of engagement rates being higher. Some of the features to look for in a virtual career fair include:

- Written Chat - real-time conversations that happen via text are the easiest and most efficient way of communicating with several people simultaneously.
- Audio conversations - great chat conversations can be elevated to phone calls right on the platform.
- Video conversations - if chat or phone conversations somehow still feel insufficient, it is great to have the option of talking “face to face” without having the hassle with third-party software.
- Live Q&A - during presentations and talks, being able to ask real-time questions provides immense value for participants and exhibitors alike.

#### **4.11. Scheduling one-on-one conversations**

Virtual career fairs make it easy to handle several fluid chat conversations simultaneously. However, sometimes a little structure is great to get the conversation started. A great feature to assist there is providing a schedule for video conversations.

That way, each recruiter can offer select times, which fair participants can book in advance. This way, both parties have clearer expectations prior to the event day and can prepare accordingly. Then, on the day of the event, the two parties will meet right on the platform!



## 5. Planning your virtual career event - step by step

You've settled on a virtual career fair solution and found your provider. Now what?

Planning a virtual career fair is not unlike planning a physical fair - you will go through several of the same steps, adjusted for optimal digital success. We've taken our learnings and experience from over 100 hosted virtual career fairs and provided this comprehensive checklist of how to plan a virtual career fair in four easy steps.

### 5.1. Step 1 - establish your goals and objectives

As with every plan, it is important to start with understanding the goal of your virtual career fair. Having one clear aim for an event is great when setting specific objectives and tracking performance.

We recommend having one overall but semi-specific goal - such as i.e. "Helping students start their career" or "Increasing the network of fair participants", and then adding "sub-goals".

For "Increasing the network of fair participants", specific metrics could for example be: setting target numbers for participant and company attendance, number of companies contacted or conversations held per participant, or setting a target for participation in a specific webinar about networking.

For each specific target, you should have a clear plan of how to achieve them. For example, maximising participation can be done through communication and marketing (e.g. see our *Virtual Career Fair Student Marketing Guide*), and increasing interaction can be done by incentivising communication through contests (see our *Gamification Data Package* that we offer).

## 5.2. Settle on size and theme

Virtual career fairs are extremely versatile and allow you to invite as specific or broad an audience as you need. Some organisers choose to keep registrations open, while others limit them (for participants as well as exhibitors).

Similarly, many virtual career fairs are very niche - meaning they focus on a specific field, industry or background of the participants. Niche career fairs are very popular to both participants and exhibitors since it gives a clearer idea of who will be there for all parties involved.

However, larger career fairs also experience significant virtual success. The lack of physical and geographical boundaries allows for a wider pool of talent and more diverse exhibitors and vacant positions.

But what is the ideal size of a virtual career fair? That depends on the theme/niche!

For hyper-specific virtual career fairs - i.e. one aimed at legal candidates located in a specific city - the amount of attendees per company can be as low as 10 per company, with 5-10 companies attending. Meanwhile, larger, broader-scale virtual career fairs should probably consider having around 25 participants per company, with at least 15 companies to ensure there are relevant connections to be made for everyone.

## 5.3. Selecting the date for your virtual career fair

Several things will play into account when selecting the perfect date of your virtual career fair. How do you select the date and time for your virtual career fair that will be good for both participants and companies, and also works with your own organisation's schedule?

We've got you covered! Here are a few tips:

1. Avoid selecting dates too close to exam seasons (usually December-January and May-June)
2. Avoid school vacations and bank holidays - especially Christmas, Easter and Summer holidays are to be avoided.

## 5.4. Establish a plan for the event day

In our experience, having a detailed plan for the day of your virtual career fair is just as important as planning for the day itself. Having clear responsibility areas and defined roles is a great way of ensuring the event runs smoothly.

For example, you can delegate roles such as responsible for live presentations, a tech help-desk, general assistance and who will be in charge of checking up on exhibiting companies.

Are you interested in more virtual career fair insights and best practices? Check out our *Insights & Best Practices* doc.

## 5.5. After a virtual career fair

What you do after a virtual career is arguably just as important as your preparation for it. For exhibitors and recruiters, it is essential to receive a debrief with a general status of how the fair went, as well as a detailed ROI report. Meanwhile, after the event you can ask for valuable feedback from participants through questionnaires and emails.

Giving your successful virtual career fair the end it deserves will ensure that it is remembered fondly and will spread the word and maximise future participation!